

American studies

Convener: Dr David Goodman (History)

The American studies program is coordinated by the Department of History, one of the leading history departments in Australia. The importance of the United States in the contemporary world and the richness and diversity of American scholarship make American studies a stimulating and practical choice for many students. The program provides students with an interdisciplinary perspective on American society, culture, history and politics. Students have the opportunity to enrich their academic experience by studying on location in Boston and New York with the popular subject 131-018 Searching for the American Dream (*p.4*). Students of American studies are in an excellent position to explore a variety of career pathways that will draw on the analytical and research knowledge gained in American studies. Students interested in expanding their interests and knowledge in this area are provided with an articulated structure of higher degree options at Melbourne.

American studies focuses on the historical and contemporary frameworks within which American politics, society and culture has developed. American studies subjects are offered by the departments of history, English, art history, cinema studies, political science and the Australian Centre.

Prerequisites

The American studies program commences in second year. The general prerequisite for entry is the completion of 50 points of first year from any area of study within the Faculty of Arts.

Please note that you should choose your first year subjects carefully to ensure that you have the appropriate prerequisites for the areas of study that offer the subjects within the program.

Requirements for a major

A major in American studies usually consists of nine 12.5 point subjects, totalling 112.5 points. It comprises:

- two first year subjects in any area of study (25 points) and;
- seven second/third year subjects (87.5 points) which must include:
 - 131-145 Contemporary American Society & Culture (*p.10*) the program's compulsory subject offered in the History Department and;
 - six subjects from the list of American studies subjects below.

American studies subjects

The following subjects are part of the American studies program. Students must consult the relevant area of study entries in this Handbook to make sure that they meet the prerequisites, if any, for these subjects.

Second/third year subjects	Sem.
Compulsory subject	
131-145 Contemporary American Society & Culture (<i>p.10</i>)	2
English	
106-022 City Cultures: Urban Stories (<i>p.13</i>)	N/A
106-031 Modernist Fiction (<i>p.13</i>)	N/A
106-033 Writing After Empire (<i>p.5</i>)	1
106-049 American Liberals and Moderns (<i>p.13</i>)	N/A
106-061 American Voices (<i>p.7</i>)	1
106-068 Imagining Hollywood (<i>p.14</i>)	N/A
Cinema studies	
107-076 Contemporary Hollywood Cinema (<i>p.2</i>)	2
History	
131-053 The Irish Abroad: Australia, UK & USA (<i>p.17</i>)	N/A
131-079 Slavery & Freedom in the USA: 1790-1900 (<i>p.8</i>)	1
131-018 Searching for the American Dream (<i>p.4</i>)	2
131-080 American Modern: USA 1890-1990 (<i>p.9</i>)	2
Political science	
166-016 American Politics and Society (<i>p.9</i>)	N/A
166-040 Constitutional Design and Change (<i>p.10</i>)	N/A
166-023 Issues in American Foreign Policy (<i>p.9</i>)	N/A
The Australian Centre	
100-003 Australia and America (<i>p.2</i>)	1 rep 2
The following subjects can be taken at fourth year as part of combined honours in American studies.	
Third/fourth year and fourth year subjects	Sem.
Art History	
107-420 Art and Mass Culture in the 1960s (<i>p.8</i>)	N/A
107-466 Postmodern Culture: Art in New York (<i>p.3</i>)	2
History	
131-018 Searching for the American Dream (<i>p.4</i>)	2

Third/fourth year and fourth year subjects	Sem.
131-416 Current Themes in American History (<i>p.12</i>)	1
131-458 American Nation (<i>p.2</i>)	2
131-462 Reading African-American History (<i>p.20</i>)	N/A
English	
106-426 Post-War American Fiction (<i>p.11</i>)	1
The following subjects contain significant American content. They may be taken as part of the combined honours program in American studies on the condition that;	
a) students identify themselves to the coordinator of the unit as American studies honours students	
b) students undertake to write their major piece of assessment for the subject on American topics.	
Art history	
107-425 Sound and Vision: Art & Popular Music (<i>p.10</i>)	N/A
Cinema studies	
107-427 Film Criticism and the Canon (<i>p.3</i>)	2
107-431 Postmodernism and the Cinema (<i>p.3</i>)	1
Political science	
166-444 The Emerging World (Dis)Order (<i>p.8</i>)	1

Combined honours entry

Currently, there is no pure honours program in American studies. This means that students must combine fourth year honours in American studies with another area of study.

The prerequisites for entry to combined honours in American studies are:

- completion of all the requirements for the BA;
- completion of a major in American studies;
- an average grade of H2B or higher over the second/third year subjects within the major and;
- admission to honours in another area of study within the Faculty of Arts.

Entry to fourth year honours must be approved by the convener of American studies and the Faculty of Arts honours course adviser.

Combined honours requirements

Students undertaking combined honours in American studies and another area of study must complete:

- 131-538 American Studies Thesis (*p.1*) or 131-537 American Studies Thesis (MYE) (*p.2*) for students commencing in Semester 2 and;
 - 131-458 American Nation (*p.2*), the program's compulsory honours subject (12.5 points) and;
 - one honours subject in American studies from the list above (12.5 points) and;
 - three honours subjects in the combined area of study (37.5 points).
- or
- an honours thesis in the combined area of study (37.5 points) and;
 - two honours subjects in the combined area of study (25 points) and;
 - 131-458 American Nation (*p.2*), the program's compulsory honours subject (12.5 points) and;
 - two honours subjects from the list above (25 points).

For more information

Dr David Goodman
Department of History
Third Floor, John Medley Building
The University of Melbourne
Victoria 3010
Tel: +61 3 8344 5963
Email: d.goodman@history.unimelb.edu.au
Web: <http://www.history.unimelb.edu.au>

Fourth year subjects

131-538 American Studies Thesis

Availability: 4th year

Credit points: 37.5

HECS-band: 1

Coordinator: David Goodman

Prerequisites: Admission to fourth year combined honours in American studies.

Contact: Regular meetings with the supervisor (*Year long*).

Description: An approved thesis topic will be selected in consultation with the convener of American studies.

Assessment: A thesis of 12 000 words.

131-537 American Studies Thesis (MYE)

Availability: 4th year

Credit points: 37.5

HECS-band: 1

Coordinator: David Goodman

Prerequisites: Mid-year admission to fourth year combined honours in American studies.

Contact: Regular meetings with the supervisor (*Semester 1, repeat 2*).

Description: An approved thesis topic will be selected in consultation with the convenor of American studies.

Assessment: A thesis of 12 000 words.

131-458 American Nation

Note: Formerly available as 131-103. Students who have completed 131-103 are not eligible to enrol in this subject. This is an advanced seminar. Students enrolled in fourth year combined honours in American studies must complete this subject, see *Combined honours entry (p.1)*.

Availability: 4th year

Credit points: 12.5

HECS-band: 1

Coordinator: Kate Ellinghaus & Glenn Moore

Prerequisites: Usually admission to the postgraduate diploma or fourth year honours in history, or admission to fourth year combined honours in American studies.

Contact: A 2-hour seminar per week (*Semester 2*).

Description: This subject critically considers aspects of American nation and identity from the birth of the 'American Nation' until the present day. Topics will focus on moments when the American people have crystallised or contested their idea of 'nation', such as the Revolution, the Spanish-American War, the New Deal period and the 1960s. Students should complete the subject having encountered some classic sites of American national representation, for example, the national imagery produced by the New Deal agencies in the 1930s, Hollywood nationalism of different eras, contemporary political rhetoric, and with an ability to read these sites within and against the debates in American studies. Students will also explore various ways in which Americans have represented themselves and their nation through film, literature or popular culture. Broad themes include: the inclusiveness of the American nation (who was left out?), the myths surrounding the American Nation (are Americans really 'free?') and how nations perceive America from the outside. We will examine images or icons that are seen as defining American national identity such as the 'cowboy', the Revolutionary, Macdonalds and Route 66. America as a colonial power, the myths surrounding the American nation 'independence', 'the melting pot', the way it has been represented and defined through film and art. Inclusiveness of the American nation, who was left out? Whether it was ever truly representational or whether it is a broad construct which has no relevance to present-day American society.

Assessment: Written work totalling 5000 words for 4th year, 5000 words and a class paper for masters students.

Prescribed texts: A subject reader will be available.